



Preferred Worker Program

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What is the Preferred Worker Program?

The Preferred Worker Program gives employers financial incentives to hire workers who, because of a workplace injury or occupational disease, cannot return to their old job. These workers are able to work, but they are unable to perform the job they used to do. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) certifies a preferred worker for 36 months.

What are the financial benefits for employers?

You receive financial protection against subsequent injury.

If you hire a preferred worker and he or she is injured within the 36-month period, L&I will pay all claim costs through a “second injury fund” with no direct cost or penalty to you.

- If you’re an employer with industrial insurance coverage through L&I’s State Fund, injury costs will not be charged against your account and the injury will not affect your experience rating.
- If you’re a self-insured employer, the second injury fund will reimburse your claims costs after you close the claim.

You receive premium relief.

If you’re a State Fund employer, you don’t pay accident fund or medical aid premiums on the preferred worker from the approved hiring date through the certification period. You and the preferred worker will pay only the supplemental pension premium. If the preferred worker leaves your employment before the certification period ends, premium relief also ends.

I’m an employer. How do I hire a preferred worker?

State Fund and self-insured employers can hire preferred workers. The following conditions must be met to qualify for benefits:

- The person you hire has a valid preferred worker certificate issued by L&I.
- You were not the worker’s employer at the time he/she was injured.
- You file an “Intent to Hire a Preferred Worker” form with L&I within 60 days of the date of hire. After we receive the completed form, we will verify eligibility for you and the worker you hire.

I’m an injured worker. How do I qualify for preferred worker status?

If you have an open claim for a work-related injury or illness and you meet the following criteria, you could be eligible for preferred worker status. Ask your vocational counselor or claim manager how to become certified.

- You need to change employers to obtain suitable work.
- A vocational counselor must recommend you for preferred worker status.

- You are actively seeking work.

Where can I get more information?

Department of Labor and Industries
Preferred Worker Program
P.O. Box 44324
Olympia WA 98504-4324
1-800-845-2634

On the web: PreferredWorker.LNI.wa.gov

What happens if a preferred worker is injured?

Employers covered by L&I's State Fund

If a preferred worker suffers a work-related injury or disease during his/her 36-month certification, indicate class code 7204 on the employer's section of the "Report of Industrial Injury or Occupational Disease." Alerting L&I that the claim involves a preferred worker prevents you from being charged claim costs. If you have questions, contact Employer Services at 360-902-4817.

Self-insured employers

You manage the claim for a preferred worker and pay all benefits. When you are ready to close the claim, notify L&I's Self-insurance section that the claim was for a preferred worker and request reimbursement of claim costs. If you have questions, contact the Self-insurance Section at 360-902-6901.

What if a preferred worker leaves your employment?

If you terminate a preferred worker's employment or he/she leaves before the 36-month certification expires, you should notify L&I of this in writing:

Department of Labor and Industries
Employer Services
P.O. Box 44144
Olympia, WA 98504-4144

IMPORTANT! A preferred worker is certified for a *total* of 36 months. Example: If an employer hires a newly certified worker for 12 months, and the worker changes employers, the second employer is eligible for benefits for only 24 months.

To read this publication in Spanish, request F280-021-999 from your local L&I office. Check the government section or white pages of your telephone book for the phone number of the office nearest you.

Visit the L&I web site at www.LNI.wa.gov

This document is available in other formats to accommodate persons with disabilities. For assistance, call 1-800-547-8367. (TDD users, please call 360-902-5797.) Labor and Industries is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

